ATLAS COMICS
25c
NO.2
JULY
43384
THE COUGAR™
BEGINNING IN THIS ISSUE...
THE ORIGIN OF THE COUGAR!
BUCKLER/MILGROM
THE COUGAR-- AND THE WOLF MAN--
THEY'RE -- FALLING! THEY'LL BOTH BE KILLED!

MARK Sunderd.

THE LIGHTS GLARE—THE CAMERAS ROLL! A TYPICAL SCENE IN THE WORLD OF MOTION PICTURES-- EXCEPT, BEFORE THIS DAY'S FILMING ENDS, THE ENTIRE CAST WILL TAKE --

...A WALK WITH THE... WEREWOLF!

DIE, TROJANS! FALL TO YOUR KNEES AND BEG FOR MERCY --OR HAVE YOUR THROATS SLIT!

ARRRH! TAKE IT EASY, RAND! THIS IS JUST MOVIE WORK --NOT WAR!

LARRY LIEBER / EDITOR | GARY FRIEDRICH / WRITER | FRANK SPRINGER / ARTIST | SHARON IBORN / LETTERER

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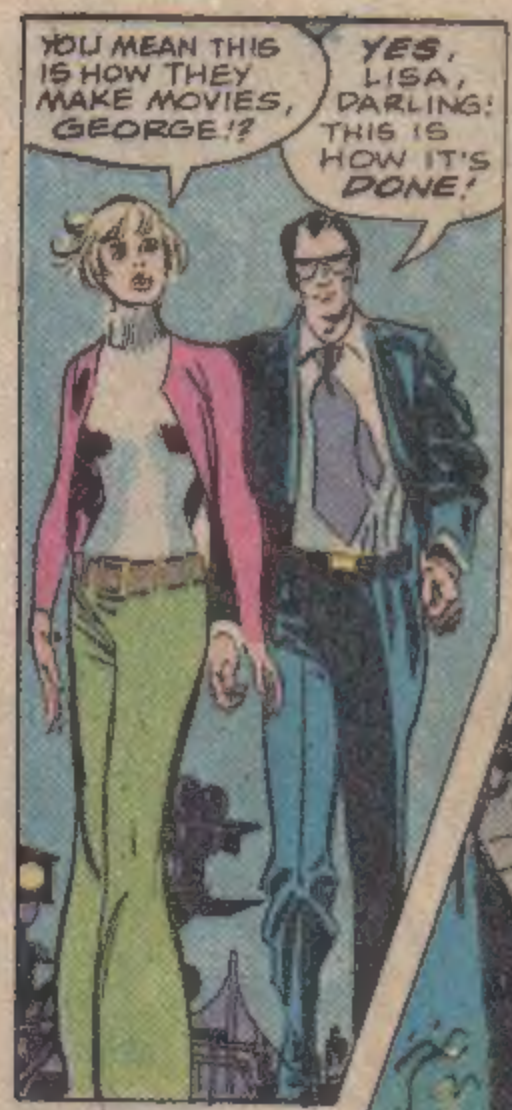

YOU MEAN THIS IS HOW THEY MAKE MOVIES, GEORGE!?
YES, LISA, DARLING! THIS IS HOW IT'S DONE!

JACKMAN WANTS REALISM -- TODAY HE'S GONNA GET IT!
THE MOOD I'M IN -- I MIGHT REALLY CUT SOMEONE'S HEAD OFF!

BUT IT'S SO REALISTIC! THOSE MEN REALLY LOOK AS IF THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL ONE ANOTHER!
HOW CAN THEY FIGHT LIKE THAT -- IF IN REAL LIFE THEY'RE FRIENDS?

IT'S JUST A JOB TO THEM -- AND THEY HAPPEN TO DO IT VERY WELL -- THE MAIN CHARACTER, JEFF RAND IN PARTICULAR!
WATCH WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT! RAND HAS TO DO THIS PERFECTLY! THEY DUMP A SPECIAL CHEMICAL USED FOR FILM FIRE SCENES ON HIM, WHICH HE THEN IGNITES WITH A MATCH OUT OF THE CAMERA'S VIEW!

"SEE? THEN, IN FLAMES -- HE LEAPS INTO THE WATER BELOW.

"AND, BEFORE ANY HARM CAN BE DONE TO HIM, HE SPLASHES INTO THE WATER AND THE FIRE IS EXTINGUISHED.
SPLOOSH!

CUT, JACKMAN! THERE'S SOME CLOWN FLOATING OUT THERE WITH HIM! THE SCENE IS RUINED!

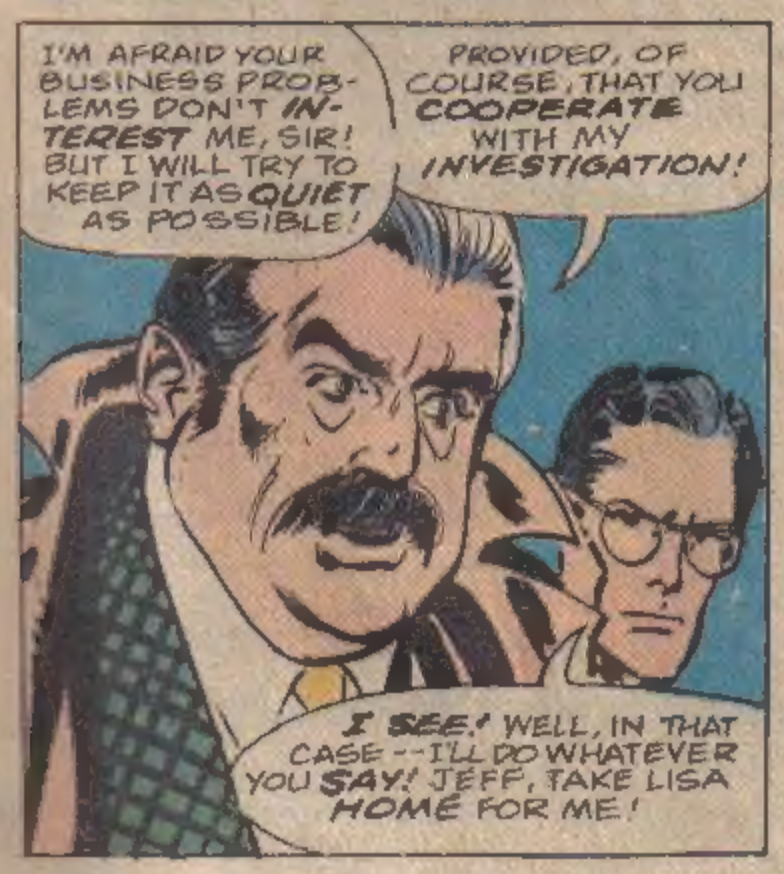
MY GOD! HE -- HE'S DEAD! AND HIS THROAT -- LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEEN RIPPED OUT!

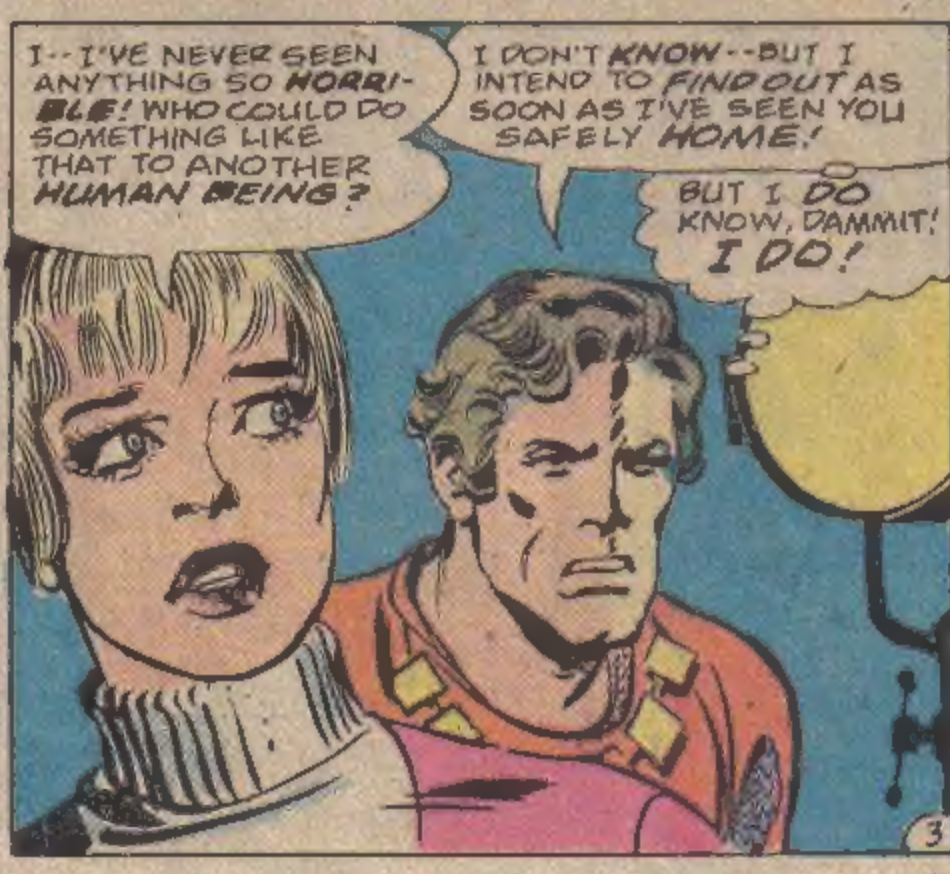
WHAT IS IT, GEORGE? WHO'S THAT FLOATING OUT THERE!?
I DON'T KNOW -- BUT IF HE'S CAUSED US TO RESHOOT THE SCENE, HE'LL PAY FOR IT HIMSELF!

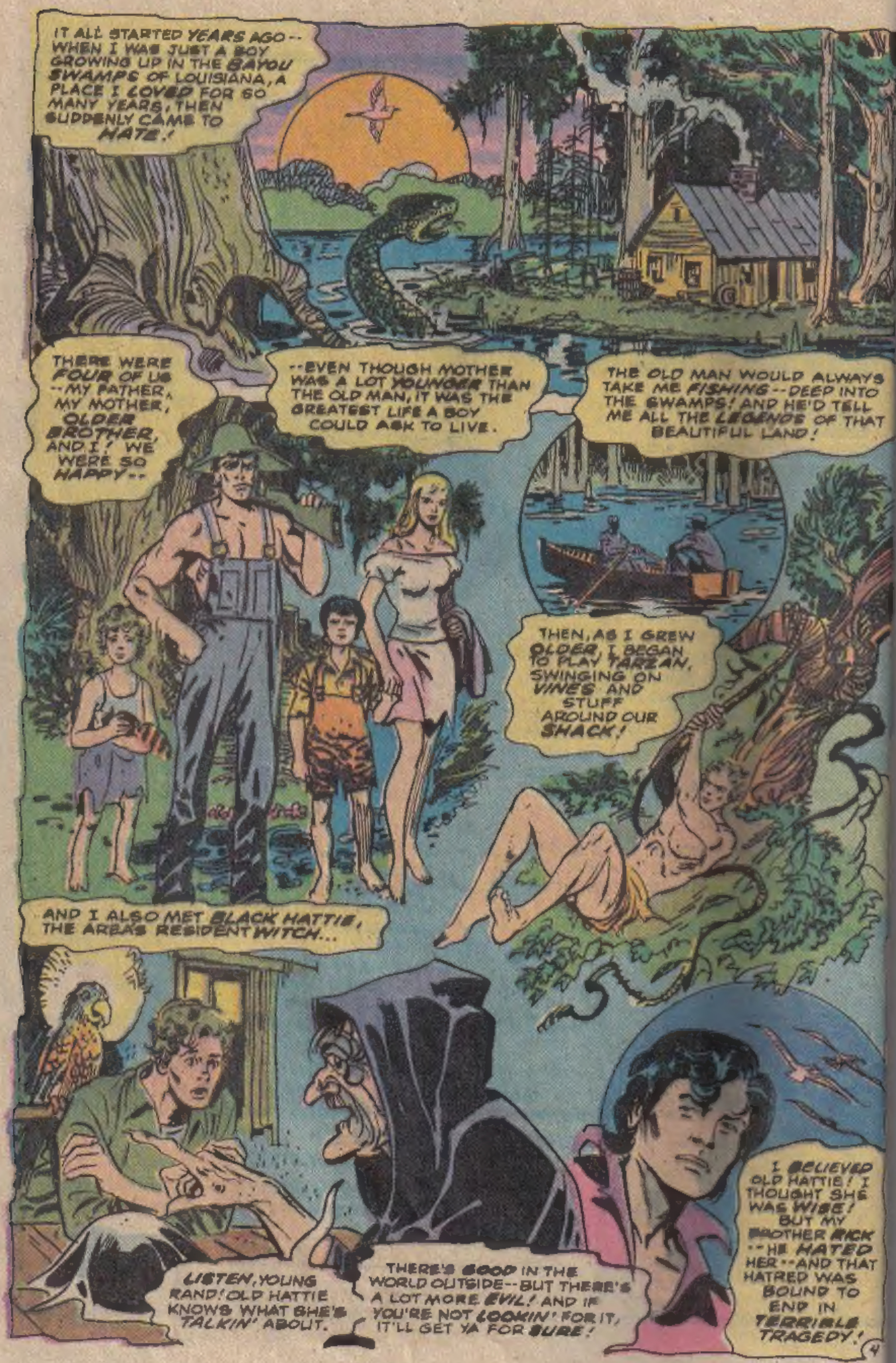
WHAT IS THIS! I'M PRODUCING THIS PICTURE, YOU KNOW!
IT'S A DEAD MAN, MR. PRENTISS--AND HE ISN'T IN THE SCRIPT!
THIS MAN IS A DETECTIVE, GEORGE! HE JUST HAPPENED TO BE VISITING THE SET TODAY!
AND HE'S DEFINITELY RIGHT--THE MAN'S BOUGHT IT! HAD HIS THROAT TORN OUT--LIKE BY AN ANIMAL OR SOMETHING!

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, LIEUTENANT MARCUS--I MEAN THE CONDITION OF THE BODY!
IT'S MY JOB TO ASK THE QUESTIONS, MR. RAND.
HOWEVER, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO FIND ANY ANSWERS UNTIL I HAVE A REPORT FROM THE CORONER!

SINCE YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THIS PRODUCTION, MR. PRENTISS, I MUST INSIST THAT YOU COME DOWNTOWN WITH ME!
WHAT?! YOU MEAN QUESTIONS--PUBLICITY? SORRY, BUT MY COMPANY DOESN'T NEED THAT KIND OF BUILD-UP!


I'M AFRAID YOUR BUSINESS PROBLEMS DON'T INTEREST ME, SIR! BUT I WILL TRY TO KEEP IT AS QUIET AS POSSIBLE!
PROVIDED, OF COURSE, THAT YOU COOPERATE WITH MY INVESTIGATION!
I SEE! WELL, IN THAT CASE--I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU SAY! JEFF, TAKE LISA HOME FOR ME!


I--I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO HORRIBLE! WHO COULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING?
I DON'T KNOW--BUT I INTEND TO FIND OUT AS SOON AS I'VE SEEN YOU SAFELY HOME!
BUT I DO KNOW, DAMMIT! I DO!


IT ALL STARTED YEARS AGO -- WHEN I WAS JUST A BOY GROWING UP IN THE BAYOU SWAMPS OF LOUISIANA, A PLACE I LOVED FOR SO MANY YEARS, THEN SUDDENLY CAME TO HATE!
THERE WERE FOUR OF US -- MY FATHER, MY MOTHER, OLDER BROTHER, AND I! WE WERE SO HAPPY --
-- EVEN THOUGH MOTHER WAS A LOT YOUNGER THAN THE OLD MAN, IT WAS THE GREATEST LIFE A BOY COULD ASK TO LIVE.
THE OLD MAN WOULD ALWAYS TAKE ME FISHING -- DEEP INTO THE SWAMPS! AND HE'D TELL ME ALL THE LEGENDS OF THAT BEAUTIFUL LAND!
THEN, AS I GREW OLDER, I BEGAN TO PLAY TARZAN, SWINGING ON VINES AND STUFF AROUND OUR SHACK!
AND I ALSO MET BLACK HATTIE, THE AREA'S RESIDENT WITCH...
LISTEN, YOUNG RAND! OLD HATTIE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S TALKIN' ABOUT.
THERE'S GOOD IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE -- BUT THERE'S A LOT MORE EVIL! AND IF YOU'RE NOT LOOKIN' FOR IT, IT'LL GET YA FOR SURE!
I BELIEVED OLD HATTIE! I THOUGHT SHE WAS WISE! BUT MY BROTHER RICK -- HE HATED HER -- AND THAT HATRED WAS BOUND TO END IN TERRIBLE TRAGEDY!

I'VE HAD IT WITH THAT OLD HAG HANGIN' 'ROUND HERE!
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY--NEXT TIME SHE COMES 'ROUND--I'M GONNA RUN HER OFF FOR GOOD!
BITE YER TONGUE THERE, BOY! THAT'S YER MAW YER TALKIN' TO! 'SIDES, THERE'S SOMEBODY AT THE DOOR!

HATTIE! NICE OF YOU TO DROP BY --COME ON IN!
THANK YE! DON'T MIND IF I DO!
WELL I MIND, AND IT'S MY HOUSE, TOO! SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO BACK INTO THE SWAMPS, YOU UGLY OLD WITCH!?

ALL YOU ARE IS RAGS AND MOUTH--THAT'S IT!
AND I'M FED UP WITH YOU FILLIN' MY LITTLE BROTHER'S HEAD FULLA FAIRY TALES!
THEY AIN'T GONNA DO NOTHIN' BUT CAUSE HIM TROUBLE! SO YOU JUST GET OUTTA HERE BEFORE I THROW YOU OUT!

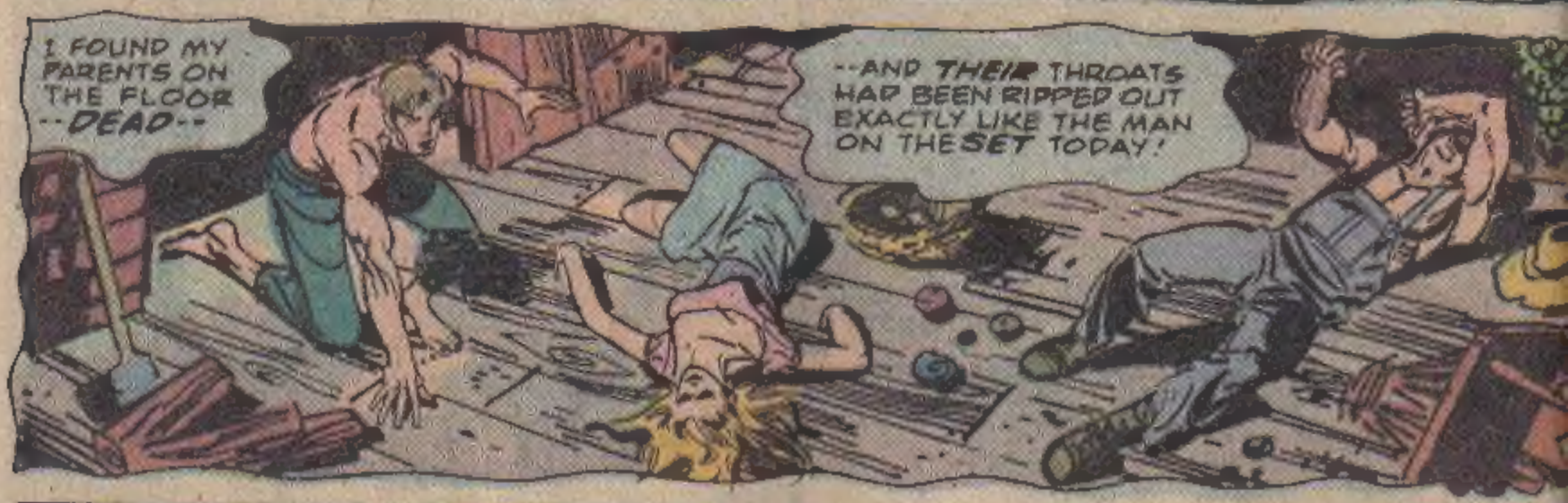
I'M SORRY, HATTIE! RICK JUG' AIN'T BEIN' HIMSELF!
AH, HE'S BEIN' HIMSELF ALRIGHT--EVIL INCARNATE--FILLED WITH HATE, SELFISHNESS AND GREED!
BUT THERE'S A PLACE FOR HIS KIND--AND RIGHT NOW, I PLACE A CURSE ON HIM THAT'LL PUT HIM THERE--FOREVER!

TWO YEARS PASSED AFTER THAT DAY, AND I NEVER SAW HATTIE AGAIN! BUT EVERYTHING WAS PEACEFUL--ME PLAYING TARZAN ON THE VINES AND FISHING--SO I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT HER AFTER A WHILE--

--NOT UNTIL I CAME IN FROM THE SWAMPS ONE DAY AND FOUND--
ROWRR!

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS--SOMETHING HALF-MAN--HALF-WOLF! BUT I BATTLED IT--FOUGHT IT UNTIL, AT LAST, I COULDN'T FIGHT ANY MORE!

I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I WAS UNCONSCIOUS--
--ONLY THAT WHEN I OPENED MY EYES AND MANAGED TO FOCUS ON THE BLOODY SCENE WHICH HAD BEEN MY HOME--


I FOUND MY PARENTS ON THE FLOOR --DEAD--
--AND THEIR THROATS HAD BEEN RIPPED OUT EXACTLY LIKE THE MAN ON THE SET TODAY!

THE RESEMBLANCE IS ALMOST UNCANNY --AS IF I WERE RELIVING THE PAST!
BEG PARDON, MR. RAND! YOU SEEMED TO BE THINKING ALOUD--ALTHOUGH NOT VERY COHERENTLY!
IS THERE SOME LIGHT YOU MIGHT SHED ON THIS CASE?!
ERRR--NO! AT LEAST I DON'T THINK SO!

LOOK, MAYBE YOU'VE BEEN WORKING TOO HARD, RAND! GO ON HOME, AND I'LL TAKE LISA WITH ME!
WHA--OH! COOL! I COULD DO WITH SOME TIME TO THINK --ERR, I MEAN SLEEP!

OF COURSE! I'LL GET MY CAR, LIEUTENANT--AND MEET YOU AT HEADQUARTERS!
WAIT FOR ME HERE, LISA! AND YOU GET SOME REST, RAND!
I WILL--THANKS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

HOWEVER, SEVERAL HOURS LATER, SLEEP IS THE LAST THING ON JEFF RAND'S MIND...
I HAVEN'T SEEN RICK SINCE THE NIGHT THE FOLKS WERE KILLED!
HE'S MY BROTHER! BUT I CAN'T FORGET HATTIE'S CURSE! WHAT IF--DARE I EVEN THINK IT?!

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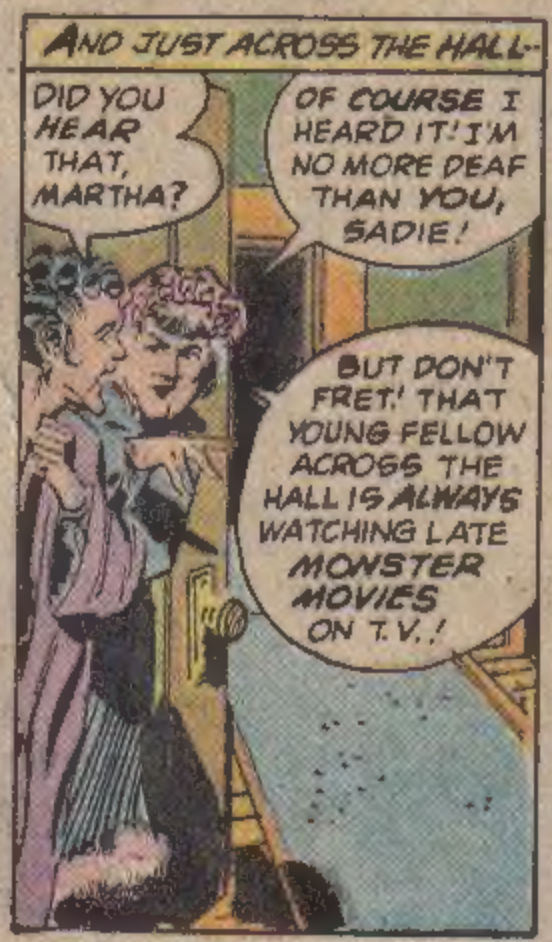
IF--IF THIS IS SOME KIND OF GAG, JEFF--
GRRRRRRR!

UUNNHH!
GRROWR!

AAIEEE!

OOWWOO!


AND JUST ACROSS THE HALL--
DID YOU HEAR THAT, MARTHA?
OF COURSE I HEARD IT! I'M NO MORE DEAF THAN YOU, SADIE!
BUT DON'T FRET! THAT YOUNG FELLOW ACROSS THE HALL IS ALWAYS WATCHING LATE MONSTER MOVIES ON T.V.!

NOSEY NEIGHBORS! GUESS THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR RUNNING AROUND DRESSED IN THESE LONG FLANNELS!
SLAM!
CAN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, THOUGH! HAVE TO TALK TO ROGER ABOUT RICK! HE'S MY ONLY HOPE TO FIND AN ANSWER-- AND DISPEL MY FEARS!

A STARTLING SHOCKING DISCOVERY--THEN A DESPARATE CALL TO THE POLICE FOLLOWS, AND A HALF-HOUR LATER--
ODD, RAND--I MEAN TWO SIMILAR MURDERS IN ONE DAY--
--AND YOU JUST HAPPEN TO DISCOVER BOTH OF THEM! COINCI-DENCE--?!

ARE YOU ACCUSING ME OF SOMETHING, MARCUS?! THAT'S MY COUSIN BACK THERE--
--TORN APART AS THOUGH BY A GRIZZLY! YOU WANT TO ARREST ME--HELP YOURSELF!

I'M NOT ACCUSING YOU OF ANYTHING, JEFF! WHAT I AM DOING IS MY JOB--
--NASTY AS IT GETS SOMETIMES! I DON'T SUSPECT YOU OF ANYTHING--
--EXCEPT MAYBE WITH-HOLDING SOME KIND OF INFORMATION!

WHAT COULD I WITHHOLD? I TOLD YOU HOW MY PARENTS DIED--
--LIKE THE TWO PEOPLE TODAY! BUT I DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER FOR IT--
--ANY MORE THAN YOU DO!

THERE--IN THE WINDOW!
I DON'T KNOW WHO--OR WHAT IT IS--BUT I'M GOING TO FIND OUT!
NO! WAIT! UNLESS YOUR GUN'S LOADED WITH SILVER BULLETS--LET IT GO!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, JEFF?
YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME--BUT YOU WERE RIGHT--I WAS HOLDING BACK IN-FORMATION!
THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS--THOSE MEN WERE KILLED BY A WERE-WOLF!

SEVERAL HOURS AND GALLONS OF COFFEE LATER AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS --

SO HELP ME, MARCUS THAT'S ALL I KNOW! SURE IT SOUNDS CRAZY--

--BUT THEN-- YOU COME UP WITH A BETTER ANSWER!

FOR THE MOMENT-- I CAN'T! ALRIGHT-- GO ON HOME AND GET SOME SLEEP - THE SUN'LL BE UP ANY SECOND NOW!

OH AND-- DON'T LEAVE TOWN UNTIL YOU HEAR FROM ME!

CAN'T BELIEVE THAT GUY! WITCHES ON THE BAYOU-- CURSES-- WERE-WOLVES!

I'VE BEEN UP TOO LONG, MYSELF! MAYBE AFTER SOME SLEEP-- I'LL PUT THIS WHOLE THING TOGETHER LOGICALLY!

MEANWHILE, THE LIEUTENANT'S LOGICAL ANSWER PONDERS HIS FATE IN A FLEA-BAG HOTEL NOT MORE THAN A BLOCK AWAY--

WHY? WHY DOES IT HAPPEN TO ME? WHY AM I TRANSFORMED?

I DON'T HATE JEFF--OR ANYONE ELSE! BUT WHEN THE MOON IS FULL--

--NO MATTER HOW I TRY TO RESTRAIN MYSELF--TO HOLD BACK THE NIGHTMARE--I CANNOT!

THERE'S NO HOPE FOR ME! I'VE ATTEMPTED TO DESTROY MYSELF--

--BUT THERE'S NO WAY-- NOTHING CAN KILL ME!

I'M DOOMED TO SPEND ETERNITY HELPLESS, AS A MONSTER!

AND, IN THE APARTMENT OF THE COUGAR...

I NEVER DREAMT IT WOULD COME TO THIS--I MEAN--IT HAPPENED SO LONG AGO! YET I REMEMBERED IT AS THOUGH IT WERE ONLY YESTERDAY--

I REMEMBER BURYING MY PARENTS--AND WONDERING WHY RICK DIDN'T EVEN SHOW!

BUT IN TIME, I GOT OVER IT. I FOUND A LIFE OF MY OWN!

AND, LUCKILY, I FOUND IT HERE IN HOLLYWOOD --THANKS TO ALL MY EXPERIENCE TREE-SWINGING BACK IN THE BAYOU!

"IT WAS GREAT BEING A STUNT MAN FOR TWO YEARS! BUT THEN, WHEN THEY OFFERED ME THE STAR ROLE IN A NEW FILM--

YOU'D BE PERFECT, RAND! THE MOVIE'S ABOUT A SUPERHERO NAMED THE COUGAR--

--AND YOU FIT THE PART TO A TEE! JUST PULL OFF YOUR STUNTS RIGHT--

AND THIS PICTURE'LL MAKE YOU A BOX OFFICE SENSATION!

"BUT WHEN THE FILM BOMBED OUT, THAT WAS THE END OF MY STARDOM DREAMS--

SORRY, JEFF! THE PUBLIC JUST WOULDN'T BUY IT!

BUT DON'T WORRY! YOU'RE STILL ONE OF THE TOP STUNTERS IN THE BUSINESS.

YOU WON'T STARVE TO DEATH!

"SO THAT FINISHED ME AS A TEENAGE IDOL! STILL, I HAD A LOT OF FUN STUNTING AND CLOWNING AROUND ON SETS--EVEN WEARING THE CORNY COSTUME LEFT OVER FROM MY DISASTROUS ATTEMPT AT STARDOM---"

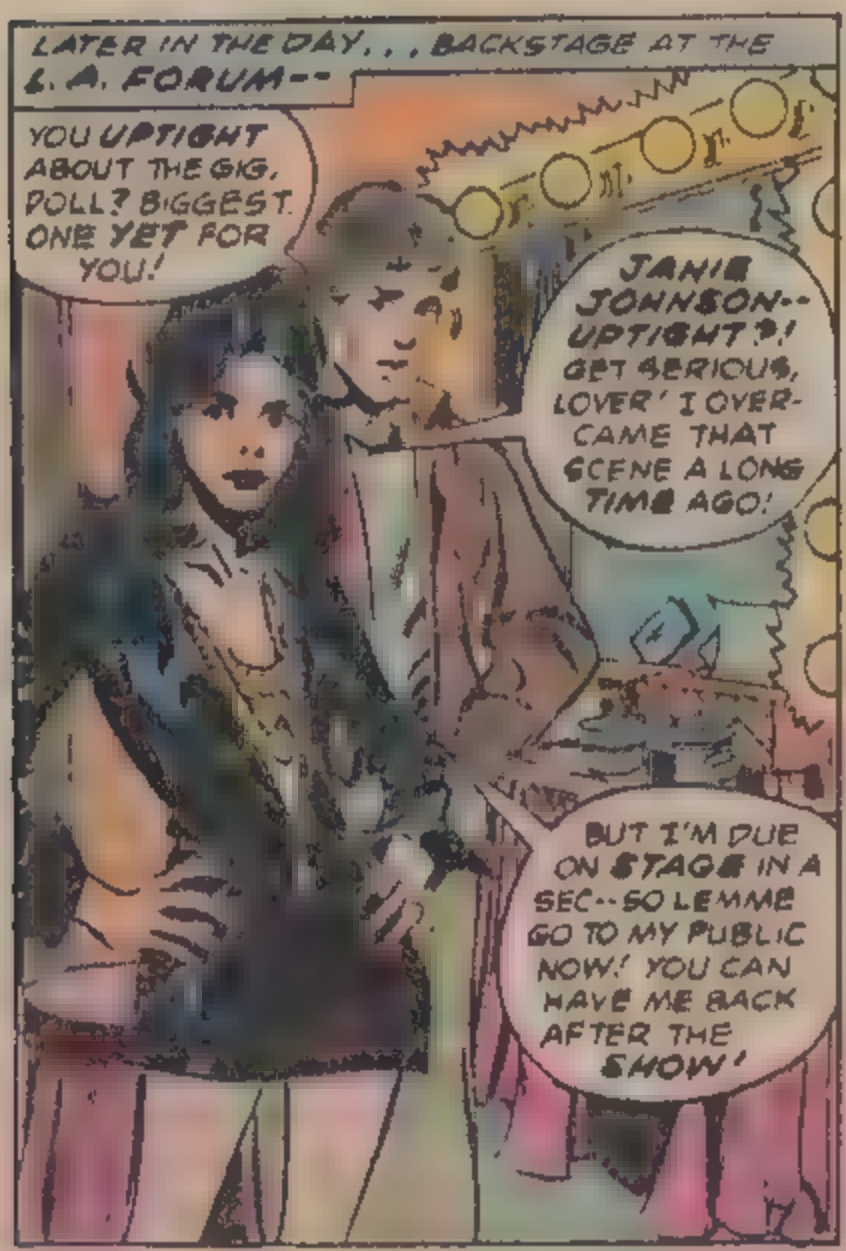
LAY IT ON US, COUGAR!

NAIL A COUPLE OF SUPER VILLAINS LIKE YOU DID IN YOUR BIG ROLE, JEFF!

BUT SUDDENLY--

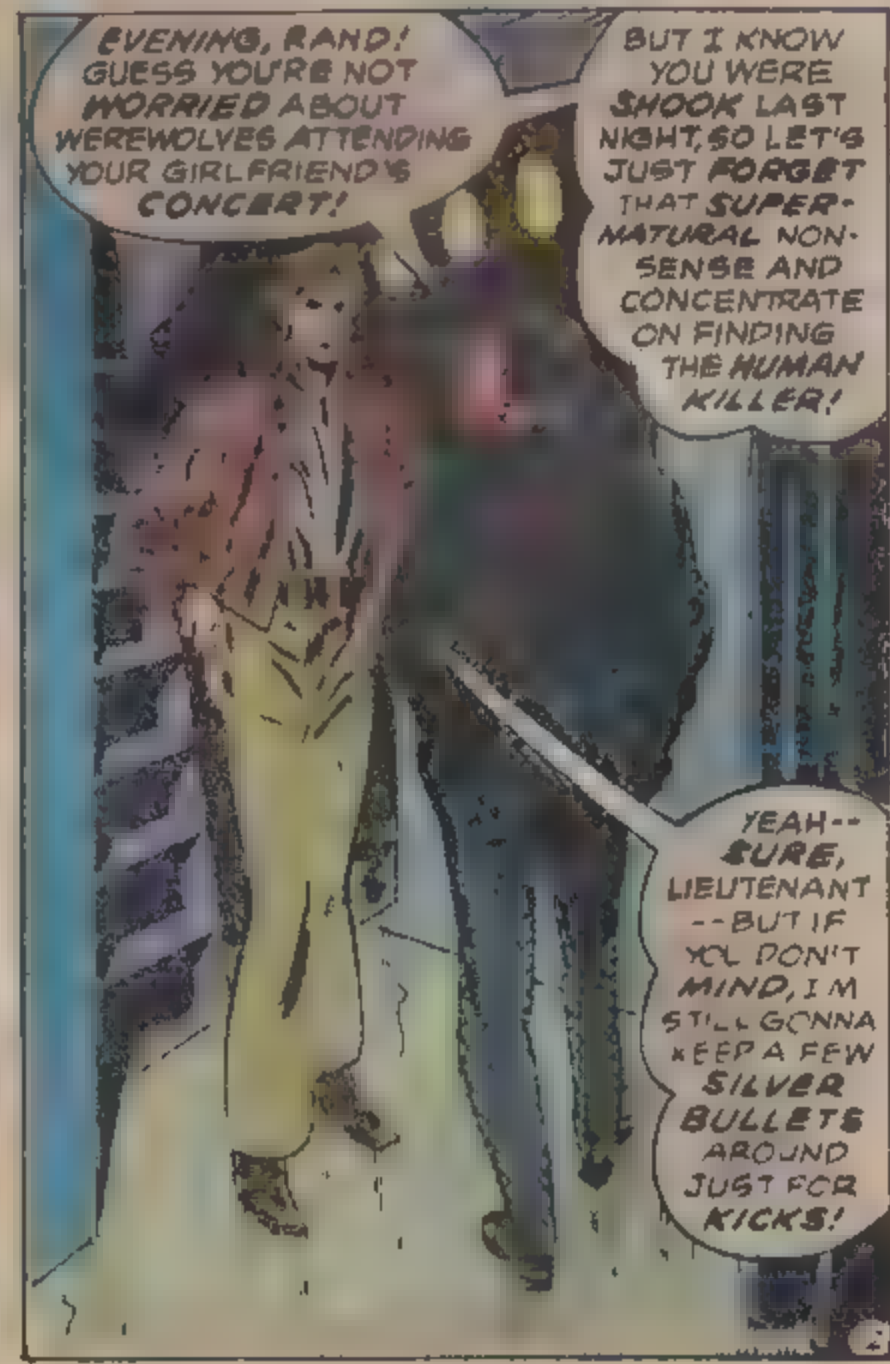
NUTS! I'VE BEEN SO BUSY TRYING TO UNRAVEL THIS MESS, I FORGOT I'M SUPPOSED TO MEET JANIE THIS AFTERNOON!

AND WHEN SHE GETS STOOD UP --WELL, I'D RATHER FACE A HUNGRY WEREWOLF ANYTIME!

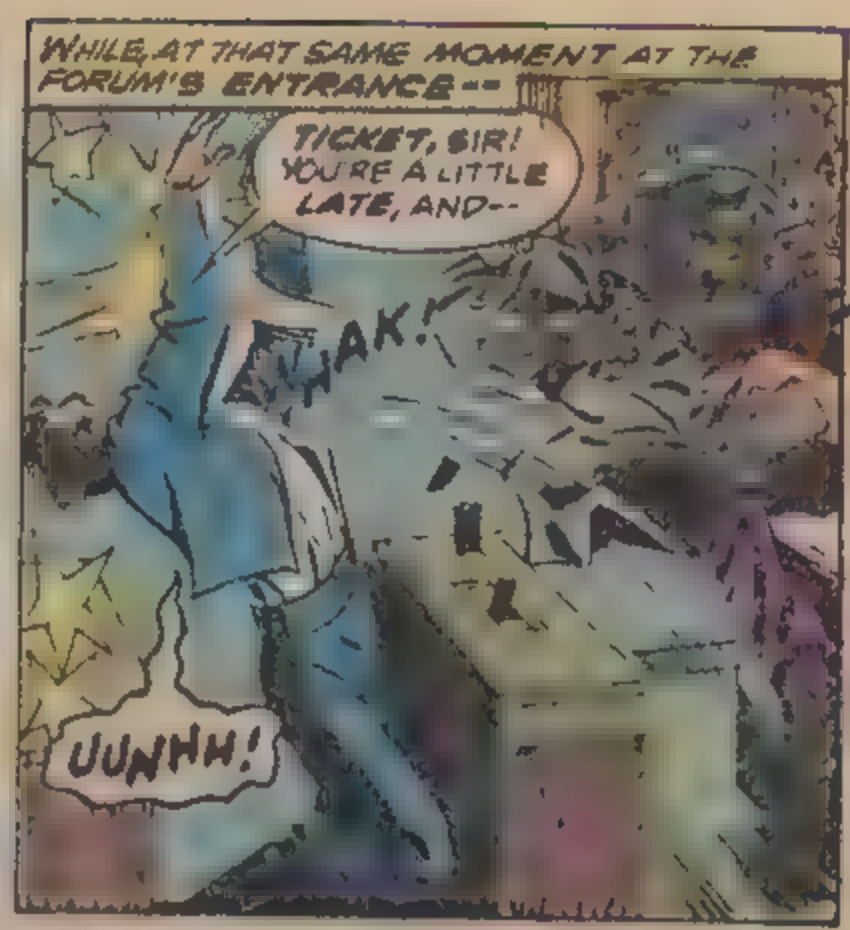

LATER IN THE DAY. . . BACKSTAGE AT THE L.A. FORUM--
YOU UPTIGHT ABOUT THE GIG, DOLL? BIGGEST ONE YET FOR YOU!
JANIE JOHNSON--UPTIGHT?! GET SERIOUS, LOVER! I OVERCAME THAT SCENE A LONG TIME AGO!
BUT I'M DUE ON STAGE IN A SEC--SO LEMME GO TO MY PUBLIC NOW! YOU CAN HAVE ME BACK AFTER THE SHOW!

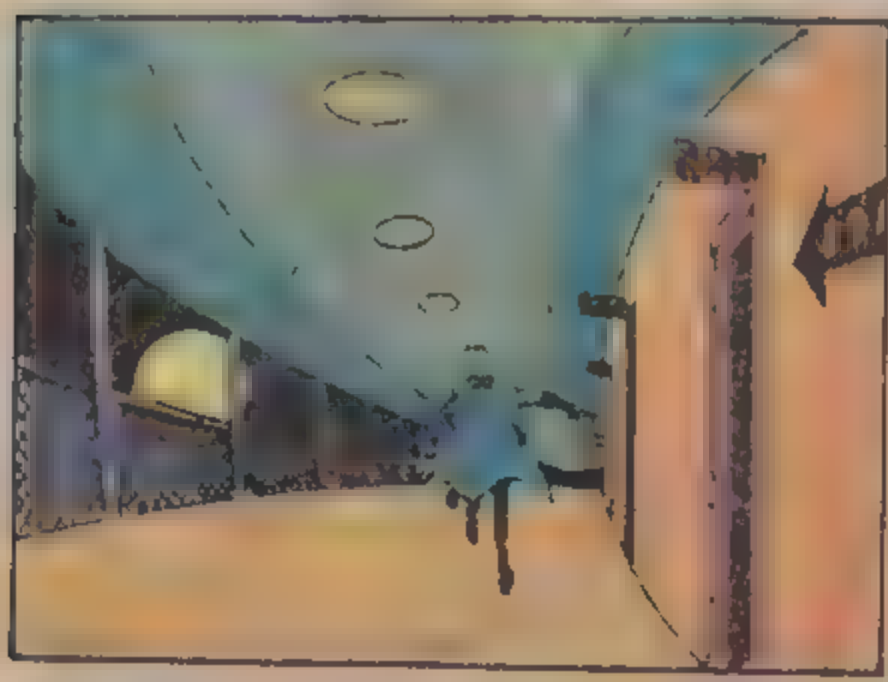
WISH ME LUCK! THIS GIG COULD MAKE MY WHOLE CAREER!
BEST, BABY--AND YOU KNOW I MEAN IT! DIG YOU LATER!
WHY DID I FEEL SO UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT THIS? HAS TO BE BECAUSE OF THE MURDERS--
--AND MAYBE MY FEAR THAT HE--OR IT--MIGHT GO AFTER JANIE TOO!

AND HOW WELL-FOUNDED ARE THE WORRIED STUNTMAN'S FEARS! FOR, EVEN AT THAT MOMENT, IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES--
KROOWRR!

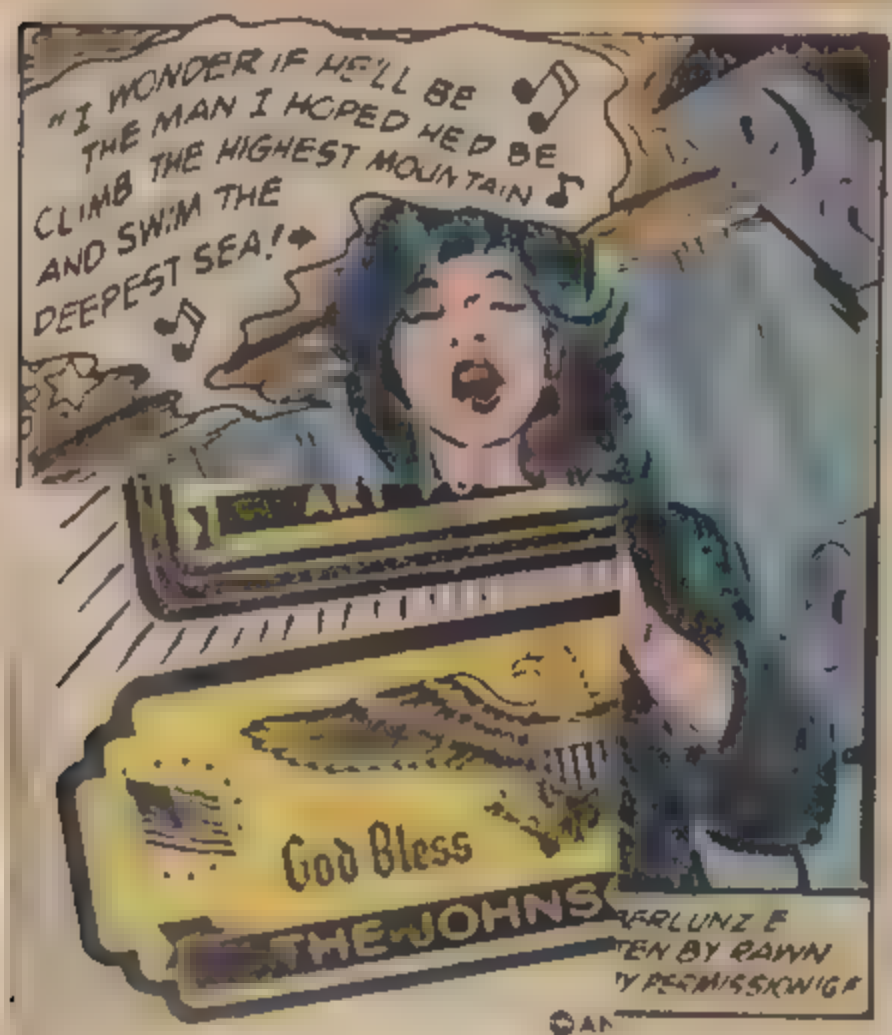

EVENING, RAND! GUESS YOU'RE NOT WORRIED ABOUT WEREWOLVES ATTENDING YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S CONCERT!
BUT I KNOW YOU WERE SHOOK LAST NIGHT, SO LET'S JUST FORGET THAT SUPERNATURAL NONSENSE AND CONCENTRATE ON FINDING THE HUMAN KILLER!
YEAH--SURE, LIEUTENANT--BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'M STILL GONNA KEEP A FEW SILVER BULLETS AROUND JUST FOR KICKS!

THEN SECONDS LATER, ON STAGE BEFORE 20,000 SCREAMING ROCK FANS--
OKAY, DUDES AND CHICKS --HERE SHE IS -- THE LITTLE GIRL FROM FLORIDA WITH THE KING-SIZED VOICE--
--JANIE JOHNSON AND THE EVERGLADES!


WHILE, AT THAT SAME MOMENT AT THE FORUM'S ENTRANCE--
TICKET, SIR! YOU'RE A LITTLE LATE, AND--
WHAK!
UUNHH!

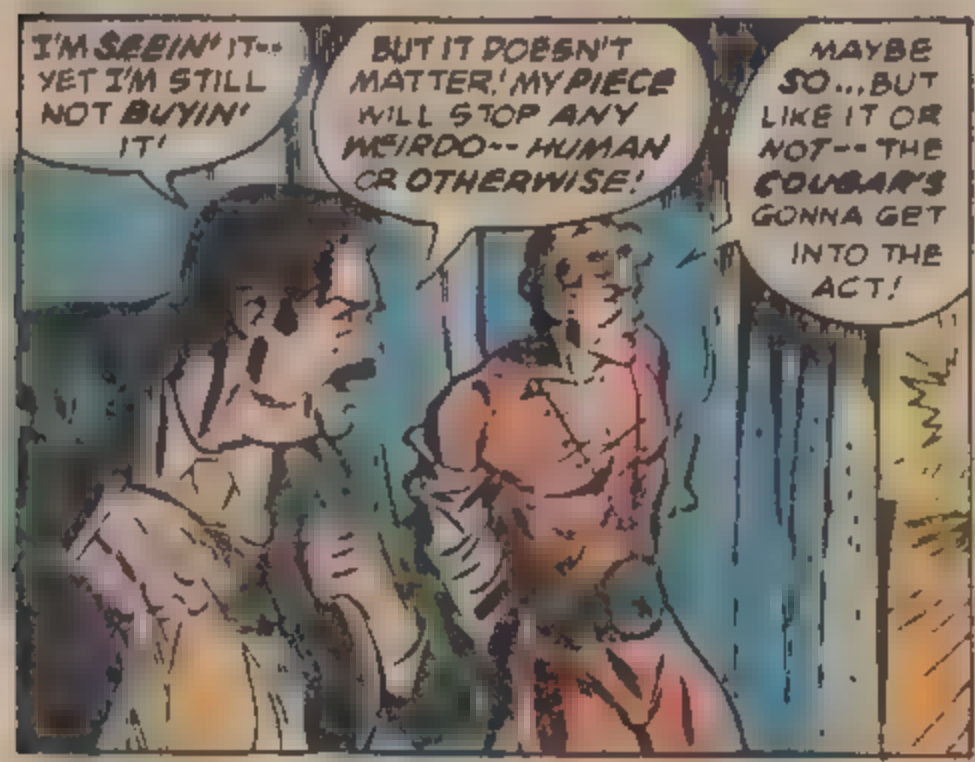


THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE MUSIC, HUH?!
EASY, MARCUS! I HAPPEN TO LIKE THE LADY-- PROFESSIONALLY AND OTHERWISE!
LIKE HER ALL YOU WANT THAT STILL DON'T MAKE IT GLENN MILLER!


"I WONDER IF HE'LL BE THE MAN I HOPED HE'D BE CLIMB THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN AND SWIM THE DEEPEST SEA!"
God Bless
THE JOHNS

HEY-- YOU CAN'T--
ARRHHH!

RRR-RH!
EEEEEE!
HEY MAN! THIS AIN'T PART OF THE ACT! I'M SPLITTIN'!

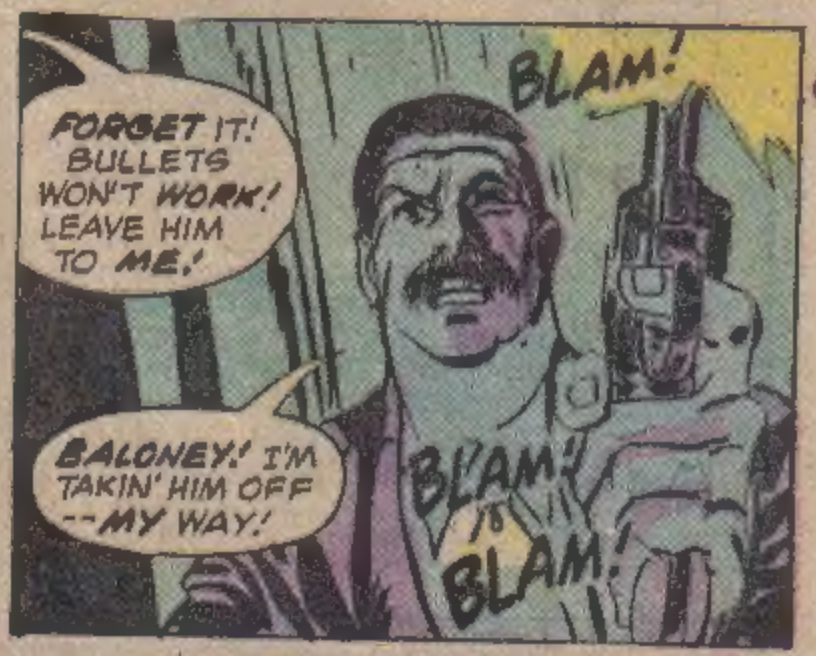

I'M SEEIN' IT-- YET I'M STILL NOT BUYIN' IT!
BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER! MY PIECE WILL STOP ANY WEIRDO-- HUMAN OR OTHERWISE!
MAYBE SO... BUT LIKE IT OR NOT-- THE COUGAR'S GONNA GET INTO THE ACT!

HOLD IT, CREEP! I DON'T KNOW WHAT GAME YOU'RE PLAYING--
--BUT IT'S GONNA GET HERE AND NOW!
NO--DON'T SHOOT! YOU'LL [illegible] ME!

SHE'S RIGHT! THERE'S NO WAY MARCUS CAN SHOOT WITHOUT CLIPPING JANIE--
[illegible] TO [illegible] ON THE [illegible] THAT BULLETS PROBABLY WOULDN'T STOP THAT THING ANYWAY!
[illegible] MAYBE-- [illegible] MAYBE-- THE COUGAR CAN!

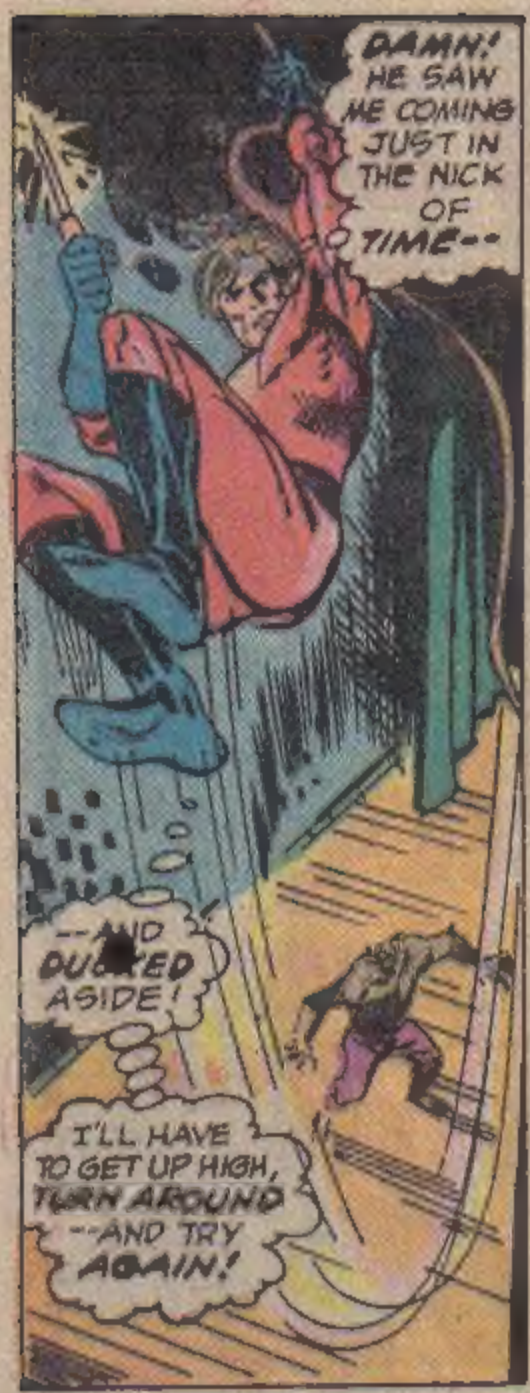
HOLD IT, FANG FACE! YOUR BEEF ISN'T WITH THEM!
SO SKIP THE PRELIMINARIES-- WE BOTH KNOW IT'S ME YOU'RE REALLY AFTER!
AND LET'S GET ON WITH THE MAIN EVENT!

RRROWRR!
OOH!
GOOD WORK, COUGAR! NOW I'VE GOT HIM DEAD IN MY SIGHTS!


BLAM!
FORGET IT! BULLETS WON'T WORK! LEAVE HIM TO ME!
BALONEY! I'M TAKIN' HIM OFF --MY WAY!
BLAM! BLAM!

OH, NO! THAT THING-- IT'S TRUE! IT REALLY IS A WEREWOLF!
GGRRR!
JEFF--STAY BACK! NOTHING CAN STOP IT-- NOT EVEN YOU!

HAVE TO TIME IT PERFECTLY--
--AND BE CERTAIN THAT MY KNIFE STRIKES IT WITH ALL THE FORCE OF MY SWING!


DAMN! HE SAW ME COMING JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME--
--AND DUCKED ASIDE!
I'LL HAVE TO GET UP HIGH, TURN AROUND --AND TRY AGAIN!

I'VE ALMOST REACHED THE TOP OF MY ARC!
I MUST MAKE THIS SWING COUNT--OR I'LL WIND UP IN THE MORGUE!

DAMN--HE'S SHIFTED POSITION! I'M HEADING STRAIGHT AT HIM-- AND THERE'S NO WAY TO CHANGE DIRECTION!
MY ONLY CHANCE IS TO MEET HIM HEAD ON--AND MAKE SURE MY KNIFE HITS HIM, BEFORE I DO!
THAT, AND PRAY THAT THIS SHIV THE PAWNBROKER SOLD ME IS REAL SILVER!

AAEGGHH!

I GOT HIM-- BUT I'VE NO TIME TO ROLL WITH THE FALL!
THIS STUNT IS GONNA COST ME-- EVERY-THING!
OOOWOO!

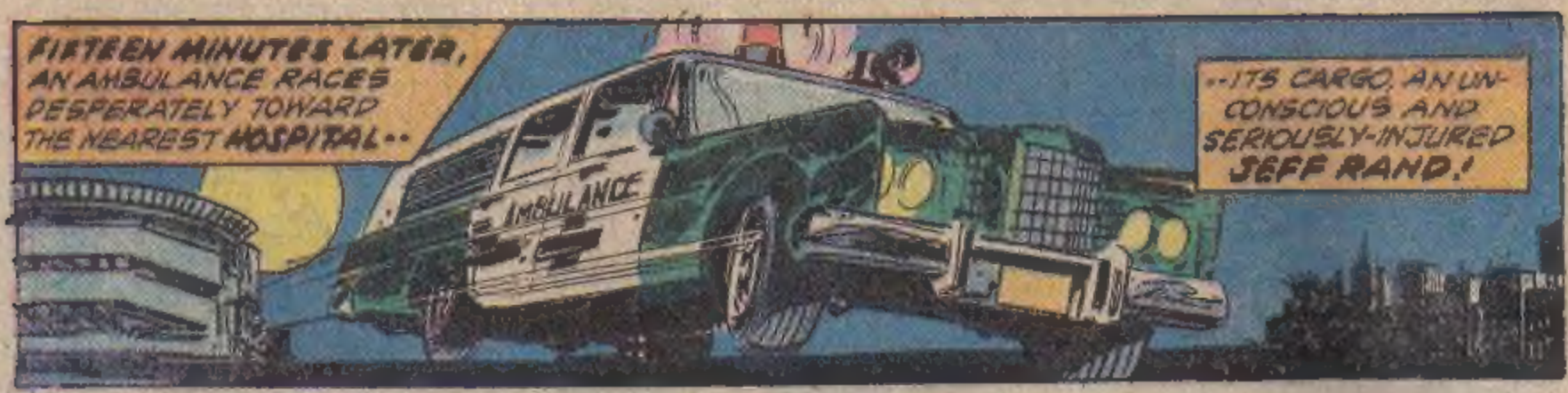
WHUP!
UUNNNH!
THUD!

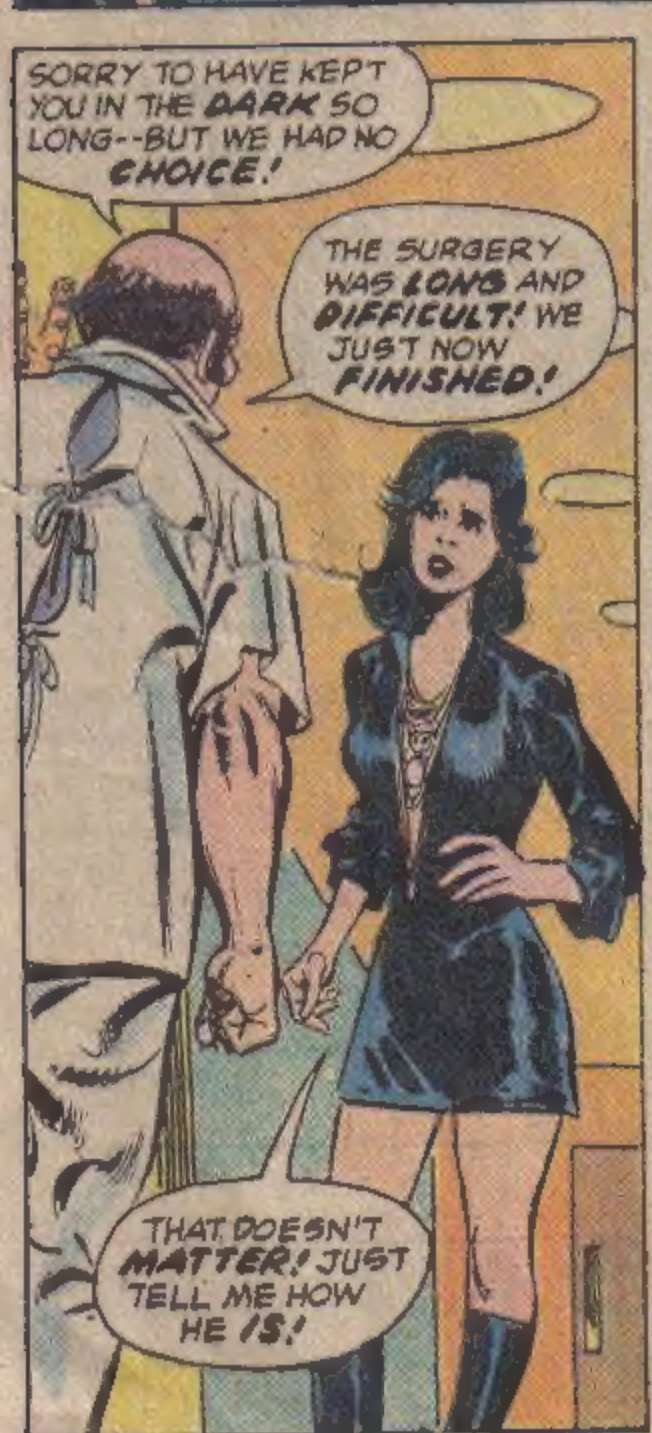
HE DID IT! THIS THING WON'T BE TEARING OUT ANY MORE THROATS-- EVER AGAIN!
ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE THAT IT REALLY IS A WERE-WOLF!

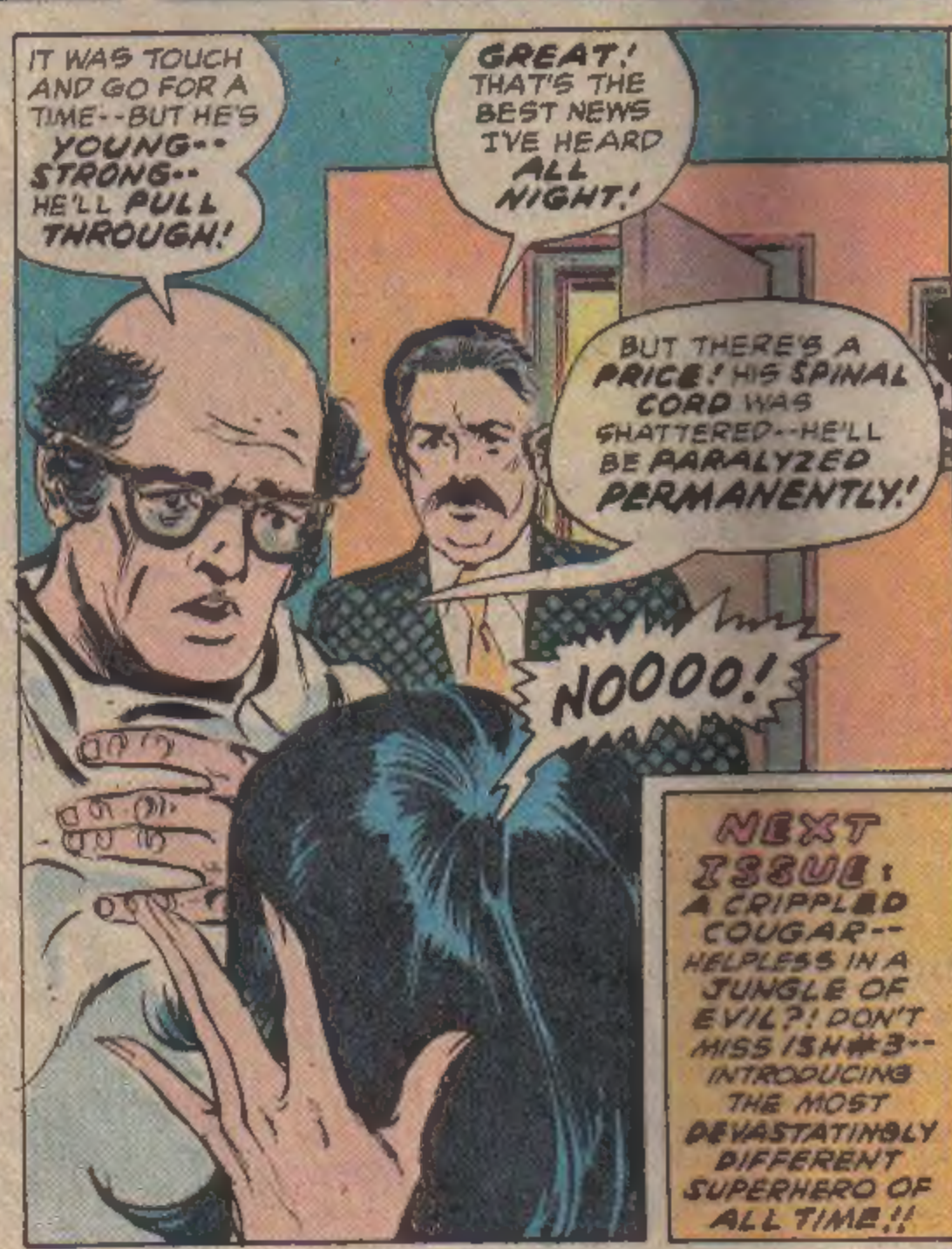
BUT RAND WAS RIGHT ALL ALONG!

I WONDER WHO THE POOR DEVIL WAS?
OH, LORD! I KNOW! GOD HELP ME -- I RECOGNIZE HIM!

HE'S JEFF'S BROTHER-- RICK RAND!
POOR JEFF-- HE MUST'VE KNOWN! I REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID JUST BEFORE HE ATTACKED IT!
JEFF! WHERE IS HE?! WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?!







NEXT ISSUE: A CRIPPLED COUGAR-- HELPLESS IN A JUNGLE OF EVIL?! DON'T MISS ISH #3-- INTRODUCING THE MOST DEVASTATINGLY DIFFERENT SUPERHERO OF ALL TIME!!